Name of Provider: Nazarene Theological College
UKPRN: 10004538

TEF Year Four provider submission

1. Provider Context

1.1. Nazarene Theological College is a small 'Alternative Provider,' recently approved by the Office for Students (OfS) as a registered fee-cap provider. The College offers undergraduate, postgraduate (taught)[1], and Research degrees programmes[2] in Theology. Established in 1944, the College has been degree awarding since 1973: first through accreditation with a North American institution, then, from 1991, through the CNAA, and, since 1992, through validation by The University of Manchester.

1.2. The College has one undergraduate programme, with three pathways. In 2017-18, the College had 107 students on these pathways (and associated certificate/diploma courses), of whom 88 were registered full time. There is a high level of coherence in the pathways:

- They share core units, with students in those course units being taught together;
- Core Programme learning outcomes are common, with distinct pathways identifying supplementary outcomes[3];
- Three external examiners oversee all the pathways; a fourth (for youth and community field-based learning) supports the professional validation of one pathway by a PSRB

1.3. The programmes are delivered as campus-based units by weekly delivery across two semesters, supplemented by short intensive study classes in January and in May. Most of these are delivered at the College's campus in Manchester, with a select few (on the Youth & Community pathway) taking certain units at a learning centre in Glasgow, approved by the University for delivery. Placement-based learning forms a significant element in two of the three pathways. The Campus delivery approach (where undergraduates from all pathways learn together in small cohorts, are in a community where they also learn alongside postgraduate students, and have easy access to the teaching staff) creates a closely-knit community that is highly valued by all students.[4]

1.4. The Mission of the College is to provide 'theological education that is academically robust and practically relevant'[5] from its place within the Evangelical tradition of the Church. Since the Church in the UK is increasingly diverse, the College's student body reflects this characteristic: the College thus serves a mature student body, drawn from demographic groups that are traditionally under-represented in Higher Education.[6] This has meant that the College has invested time and resources in

[1] One MA in Theology degree, with nominated pathways: in 2017-18 there were 72 students on these pathways, of whom 12 were full time.
[2] In 2017-18 the College had 41 PhD students, of whom 2 were full time.
[3] See NTC Undergraduate Programme Specifications
[4] This is not only reflected in NSS data, but also in NTC's internal Graduating Student Course Feedback Survey, an annual survey of all graduating students: for 2017-18, 100% of students said that the Support of Faculty and the relationship between Students and Faculty was Good or Excellent.
[4] NTC Mission Statement.
[5] NTC Mission Statement
[6] See HESA data.

supporting non-traditional students, both in terms of access to HE and in support for progression and completion.[7]

2. Teaching Quality

2.1. Core Metrics. The core metrics on teaching quality for Nazarene Theological College are very strong, being well above benchmarks for every category. With core metrics showing an indicator value in the top 10% of absolute performance in the area of teaching quality, the College would note that it has not been awarded flags because the z-score ('standard score') shows the data are insufficiently significant, due primarily to low numbers. Since the College is a 'monotechnic' niche provider, numbers will always be low, and affect the standard deviation. However, the small number does represent a high percentage of the overall population at the provider, and as the data is confirmed by other indicators of teaching quality (as will be noted below) the College would make the case that this data is robust, despite absolute numbers being low: the data on student response on teaching quality, on assessment and feedback, and on Academic support, are in line with other internal measures and with external assessment.

2.2. Quantitative Information on Teaching Faculty: Since the core mission of the College is to deliver education that is 'academically robust and practically relevant,' the College invests heavily in the recruitment and development of suitable academic staff. Of its ten full time faculty members, nine hold the PhD (90%), and the last is in the final stages of completion of the PhD. All five part-time faculty members hold the PhD (100%). They are supported in their ongoing research activity, with a weekly research day (free of committee and teaching duties) and regular and generous sabbatical leave provision.[8] This year's *Annual Research, Writing and other Activity Report*[9] reported a total of 19 academic publications (books and articles) alongside a further 44 public impact publications, all helping ensure a teaching environment that is 'academically robust.'

2.3. As befits a theological college, faculty and staff also have professional and ministerial experience: eleven of the fourteen faculty members (full and part time) are ordained ministers. Three faculty and support staff are professionally qualified youth workers (JNC). Others are qualified teachers and chaplains, so are able to support students in their varied professional development needs, ensuring studies are 'practically relevant.'

2.4. The College has a regular programme of corporate professional development of its academic staff, with a series of staff development events focussing on pedagogy.[10] In the last year these have included sessions on 'Signature Pedagogies,' on 'Rolling Induction,' on 'Mental Health Support for Research students', and on "Supporting Critical Thinking with Non Traditional Students," alongside the regular assessment workshop (which this year focussed on consistent use of assessment technologies).

2.5. College faculty and support staff members are involved in external activity related to quality systems and regulatory bodies. Eight have served as external examiners at other institutions; one is a QAA reviewer and serves on the QAA Liaison group; one

[7] Cf NTC OfS Application, and Access and Participation Plan
[8] NTC Faculty Handbook
[9] Annual Research, Writing and other Activity Report, July 2017-June 2018
[10] Table of Academic Staff Development Events

serves as the HESA data futures representative for small institutions; four are Fellows of the HEA.

2.6. The quality of the College's teaching team has been recognised by external bodies and individuals.

- External examiners this year (2017-18) made the following observations: there is "abundant evidence of excellent course design. Modules are attractive and appealing without compromising academic rigour, critical scholarship and intellectual challenge. As an external, I repeatedly found myself thinking that I'd quite like to take these modules myself." "Teaching resources are excellent, marking is rigorous and fair, and the staff are dedicated and professional." "I have found the programme to be of a high standard, and often better than similar programmes of other institutions." "This is an impressively coherent program with its own distinctive profile as a ministry oriented, biblically and theologically rigorous and orthodox program."[11]
- In early 2017 the University reported in its periodic review of the College that "the level of both pastoral and academic support given to students is excellent."[12] It commended the College on the "valuable day to day dialogue between staff and students," and on "Student engagement [where] the student voice is taken seriously."[13]
- The QAA, in its most recent monitoring visit found that the college was making "commendable progress," then underlined "the rich and active research environment." They noted "The highly supportive learning and pastoral support environment," commenting that "Students spoke positively about … the accessibility of staff and the availability of personal and academic support."[14]

2.7. The College engages with a range of regular and systematic student feedback processes, and these confirm the student perception that the quality of teaching and learning opportunities is high.

- At the end of every course unit, students complete a unit evaluation, which includes a series of questions using a Likert scale and a number of open-ended questions. These are aggregated by the Academic Office, considered by the Dean and Faculty member, and then brought to the end-of-term subject area group, where they are considered as part of the course review, and a written report submitted. The aggregated data is posted on the Dean's Notice Board. For 2017-18, the overall average aggregate score for the 21-question survey rated classes and lecturers at 4.59 on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the top of the scale.[15]
- The Programme review (which all graduating undergraduates are invited to complete) indicated that 100% of students felt supported by the faculty (scoring this as 'good' or 'very good'), 100% were satisfied with the structure of the course ('good' or 'very good'), and felt the course met their expectations.

2.8. The College is committed to maximising student engagement in teaching and learning. Students are valued members on a range of College committees, up to and including the College's Board of Governors, where the Student Body President has full privileges and brings a report. Student representatives are thoroughly

[11] 2017-18, NTC External Examiners' Reports
[12] University of Manchester, Periodic and Institutional Review Report of NTC, 2017, p11.
[13] University of Manchester, Periodic and Institutional Review Report of NTC, 2017, p12
[14] QAA Monitoring Visit for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Nazarene Theological College, April 2018
[15] 2017-18 NTC Course Unit Evaluations (Aggregated)

inducted into these committee roles[16], and serve on academic and administrative committees: on Undergraduate and Postgraduate working groups, the Library Committee, Administrative Council and Academic Board, and a range of other bodies.[17] The four students on the Academic Committees have been involved in reading and revising this report, and have confirmed that, in their view, it 'rings true'.

3. Learning Environment and Resources

3.1. An External Examiner commented recently that "the teaching resources are excellent," and "the teaching materials [in the VLE and Library] available to students are very good." Another offered the view that the "program at NTC is a good cut above anything else on offer in the sector."

3.2. The NTC library now has over 45,000 physical volumes, with over 1600 volumes added in the last year (2017-18).[18] The gift to the college this year (2018-19) of the Grogan Library, with its specialist holdings in Mission, and in Youth & Community work, underlines and accentuates this strength. A particular investment this year in e-books has been valued by students, supplementing the large ejournal resources[19]. The library also installed (in 2017) a new online library database system (OPALS), which includes all holdings (physical and electronic), and offers a range of features that link resources to particular course units ('pathfinders'). The most recent library survey indicated that 96% of students rated the College's learning resources 'Good' to 'Excellent,' and 80% of students rated the library services as 'Very Good' or 'Excellent' – a figure in line with NSS data.[20]

3.3. The Faculty has reviewed its policies surround the College's virtual learning environment (MOODLE), and has increased the required threshold of provision for all classes.[21] This change has been implemented this year to ensure an even level of VLE resource provision. Students have indicated that they value the VLE (all students scoring the value of the VLE as Good or Very Good).[22]

3.4. Learning support: since the College has been successful in its 'widening participation' agenda, and has recruited effectively amongst mature, non-traditional students from under-represented groups, the College has invested in its learning support team to ensure that student progression and success rates remain strong.[23] The College has hired additional staff, both in the formal area of learning support, and in the areas of Chaplaincy and Mental Health Support, and student survey data indicates that students value this support very highly, with 100% of Learning Support Student's surveyed indicating that they found the support of the college excellent (85%) or good (15%)[24]. In 2016-17, 27% of new undergraduates had some form of disability – well in excess of the national benchmark of 6.6%. It s no wonder that, in the core TEF metric of academic support, NTC shows an indicator value in the top 10% of absolute performance.

---

[16] See Student Committee Induction Materials
[17] Student Representation Chart
[18] Minutes of the NTC Library Committee, May 2018
[19] Library Users Survey, 2017-18
[20] Library Users Survey, 2017-18; NSS Results, 2018, indicate that 88% of students commented that "The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well."
[21] Faculty Minutes, December 2017
[22] NTC Graduating Student Course Feedback Survey, an annual survey of all graduating students.
[23] Cf NTC OfS Application, and Access and Participation Plan
[24] NTC Learning Support Student Survey

3.5. The College has developed a Chaplaincy team with a range of specialties: from 2017-18, the College has employed a part-time Chaplain with a specialism in mental health, to recognise and address the challenges students face in this area. The College's graduating student survey indicated that 83% of students said that they felt the support of the Chaplaincy team was 'good' or 'very good.'[25]

3.6. The College's record of progression, completion, and success is strong, suggesting that this investment has proven valuable: in terms of student achievement, there are only small discrepancies when average student performance is mapped against a range of disadvantage characteristics. The performance of Mature Students is barely distinguishable from that of younger students; The performance of students with a disability is within two percentiles of the performance of students with no disability; The performance of undergraduate students from ethnic minorities does show a slight 'success gap,' with students from minority groups showing a 6% difference in overall scores against 'all students' - though this is still much better than the national benchmark (15.6%) Similarly, students from the lowest participation neighbourhoods are not performing as well as other students: again, the success gap is about 6 – 7%.[26]

3.7. Continuation rates at NTC are very good, as reflected by the TEF core metrics for this category. The College has not been awarded a 'double flag' because of a low z-score, but a difference of 7.3% over benchmark levels is clearly a significant performance, and reflects the strength in learning support documented above.

3.8. Community: at the heart of the College's ethos is a commitment to learning in community. All students are part of Pastoral Care groups, so meet weekly with faculty members, who also serve as their personal tutors.[27] Daily 'coffee break' times see all faculty and students take fifteen minutes that is ring-fenced as a key 'community space.'[28] The College offers excellent access for students to faculty members, ensuring all students are able to avail themselves of what the QAA commended as a "highly supportive learning and pastoral support environment which recognises and meets the individual needs of students effectively": the doors of faculty are open to students, and this is valued by students.[29] The NSS indicated that 100% of students observed "I have been able to contact staff when I needed to."[30]

3.9. Class sizes are deliberately kept low: average class size at undergraduate level is below 15,[31] in order to create a more personal and dialogical learning environment. Two of the three undergraduate pathways are placement-based, which allow students to develop the core competencies in the areas of practice which reflect their vocational goals. The purposeful development of reflective practitioners is well suited to the nature of the student body, as it values and builds upon their life experiences, whilst shaping them for future employment. External examiners and regulatory bodies have affirmed the quality of the placement structure and the team that supports it[32].

[25] 2017-18 NTC Graduating Student Course Feedback Survey, an annual survey of all graduating students.
[26] OFS NTC Access and Participation Plan, 2018
[27] NTC Essential Guide, p. 13
[28] College Timetable
[29] NTC Graduating Student Course Feedback Survey, an annual survey of all graduating students.
[30] NSS 2018 Results
[31] NTC Data, 2017-18
[32] External Examiner Reports, 2017-18. QAA Monitoring Report, April 2018, p 2.

3.10. The College continue to develop its physical facilities. In the past year, the College has invested in increased student cafeteria space, and developed disabled access facilities to existing spaces – an investment of £150,000 in this year alone.[33]

3.11. The Course takes pains to offer robust and comprehensive feedback to students on their assessed work, ensuring they are supported in their development. One external examiner commented, "I continue to find the levels of feedback on student work very impressive--constructive and detailed, both conceptually and at the level of the students' writing. The volume and detail of these comments is as high as I have seen anywhere. This is obviously good for the students - and I hope that it is not causing undue workload stresses for the faculty."[34]

4. Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

4.1. Since many students come to Nazarene Theological College as mature students, or with few formal qualifications (70% of students are admitted with low tariff or non-tariff entry), 'adding value' in learning gain is a key part of the College's strategic vision.[35] For those with a legacy of low achievement, or who come from a context where learning is not valued, successful outcomes are life-transforming. It was important to the College to hear that 100% of students, in both 2017 and 2018, observed in the NSS survey that ''My course has challenged me to achieve my best work."[36]

4.2. The mission of the College is to offer study that is 'practically relevant,' pertinent to the vocational objects held by a large part of the student body. Programme ILO's reflect this, underlining the need to developed competencies in ministry skills, and "foster development in terms of 'being, 'knowing,' and 'doing', which together encompass the whole person."[37] External Examiners comment on this: "I would like to commend the college and its staff as a whole for the careful and caring way in which they go about the academic task. There is always a fine line in vocational settings between meeting the requirements of the vocation and those of academia, which can sometimes be at odds with each other…., the college is aware of the challenge and is doing much to find a solid way forward."[38] In the National Student Survey, 88% of students agreed that 'My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learned."[39]

4.3. The core metrics on continuation (progression, completion, or transfer to another provider) are, as noted above (3.6) very strong, and well above benchmark rates in the sector for this student demographic.

4.4. The College is proud of the fact that, in terms of degree outcomes, there is a minimal achievement gap evident between students with disabilities and the overall cohort, and between mature students and the wider cohort.[40] As noted above, it has invested heavily in learning support provision; in creating peer learning

[33] NTC Final Accounts
[34] External Examiner Reports, 2017-18
[35] To "Develop flexible and accessible approaches to education for all, recruiting widely for a diverse student body" is part of the NTC Strategic Framework, 2015-2020
[36] NSS Survey, 2017 and 2018 Results (note that the level of participation for 2017 did not quite reach the threshold number for publication)
[37] UG Programme Specifications 2018, p1
[38] External Examiners Reports, 2015-16
[39] NSS Survey, 2018 Results.
[40] NTC Access & Participation Plan 2018; HESA data 2017-18

opportunities; in developing funding support for those from under-represented sectors of society.[41]

4.5. For students from minority ethnic groups, NTC's internal data indicates evidence of only a small achievement gap in degree outcomes of 6% (when compared to all students), and although this is well below the national gap in England of 15.6%, the College has invested, and is continuing to invest, in addressing that issue.[42] However, the TEF data indicates that BME continuation rates at NTC are well above those across the sector, confirming the effectiveness of the interventions and strategies noted above.

4.6. A similar gap exists in relation to students from low participation neighbourhoods, and whilst this is also better than the national benchmark, the College continues to ensure that it addresses this issue.[43]

4.7. The focus on employment is a natural part of the College's mission and identity: 75% of the College's faculty are professionally qualified ministers, and all have significant engagement with and commitment to faith-based practice. This concern with professional competence stems from the founding of the College in 1944: it is not a recent addition to conform to regulatory requirements, but forms part of the College's *raison d'être*. College course units reflect a balance between 'content;' 'competency,' 'character,' and 'context,' ensuring that practical application is a key part of the institution's focus. The College engages with professional bodies and advisory groups (in Youth & Community and Practical Theology pathways the College has professional validation and engages with employer bodies), and its course units engage with student placement experiences, to allow careful reflection on practice in settings that offer students genuine opportunities to prepare for employment destinations. The College's teaching, learning, and assessment policy underlines the fact that 'significant learning takes place both through and in reflection on professional practice,'[44] and the College has moved to increase the level of credit awarded for placement-based learning in recent years.

4.8. The core metrics on employment or further study indicate institutional outcomes slightly below the benchmark: a difference of 1.8%, at 90% of respondents (against a national benchmark of 91.8%). It is encouraging to see a significant uplift when observing the trajectory between years two and three (a variation of over 21 points). With only two years of suitable metrics, it is difficult to know which of these two outcomes is truly representative. However, the higher figure can be linked to the college's deliberate encouraging of its own undergraduate students to consider postgraduate study, by promoting and target scholarship resources to encourage that: the College intentionally marketed a discounted rate for NTC alumni for postgraduate study from 2016-17, and sponsored a new scholarship for BAME students, which, alongside the introduction of MA loans for alternative providers, successfully raised the number of students progressing to MA level study at NTC (from NTC alumni making up only 1 of 33 new MA entrants in 2016-17, to making up 10 of 33 in 2017-18).[45]

4.9. Mature students, however, are well above the benchmark in this area. Since the bulk of the College's undergraduate intake fall into this category (89%, against a

[41] Learning Support Unit; NTC Scholarship and Bursary Resources; Administrative Council Minutes, February 2017.
[42] NTC Access & Participation Plan 2018;
[43] NTC Access & Participation Plan 2018; HESA data 2017-18
[44] 161 Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Policy
[45] NTC Registrar's statistics, 2016-17, 2017-18.

national benchmark of 21%),[46] this is an important statistic, and underlines the College's commitment to support students into employment: with careers guidance support, with mentoring and pastoral care, with placement-learning that offers critical competency development. The reverse of this suggests that younger graduates are below benchmark (though the metrics are 'not reportable' as numbers are small). As these numbers are small, the students who have not found employment within 6 months of graduating are only 1-2 students total, but make up a significant percentage of the group. This is not an uncommon story for younger students whose goal is ministry, who often feel as if they need further experience and maturity, so spend a year or more travelling or in casual volunteering while determining their next step, and we feel that the Graduate Outcomes survey after 18 months (implemented this year) will better reflect employment outcomes for younger students in the future

4.10. The College's courses of study are designed to prepare students for employment that is highly skilled: this includes work in the faith-based sector, the charitable sector, and areas of social care and engagement. A recent QAA review observed that 'Employability is at the core of what the College does.'[47] It is, then, curious to see that this is an area below benchmark. The metrics on highly skilled employment or further study are difficult to interpret, in part because the benchmark itself has significantly declined over two years. Again, a positive trajectory over the College's two 'split years' is encouraging, but most noteworthy is the poorer performance of males when examining the splits. The benchmark for males is much higher than the overall benchmark in this sector – perhaps reflecting other traditions where only men are acceptable in ministry roles. NTC supports an egalitarian view of women in ministry, and so it is perhaps not surprising that men do not, then, outperform women to quite the same extent in this category, but are closer to the overall benchmark. This may also reflect geographical realities: that most theological colleges are based in the south, where paid ministerial employment is more readily available.

4.11. Since the College is not simply a denominational College (just under 20% of its undergraduates are from the sponsoring denomination), it does not offer a guaranteed route into ordained ministry, as is the case with some other such institutions, where Graduation is much more closely coupled to ordination. This often means that it takes graduates a little longer to find an appropriate paid ministry role, so may find graduate employment beyond the six month window.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Students at Nazarene Theological College express their satisfaction with the quality of education they experience: 100% of students in 2017 and in 2018 indicated that they were happy with the quality of the course[48]. The QAA has concluded that NTC is making "commendable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision."[49] External Examiners affirm "an impressively coherent program with its own distinctive profile as a ministry oriented, biblically and

[46] HESA data, 2017-18
[47] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Nazarene Theological CollegeMarch 2016, p2.
[48] NSS Results. Note that participating student numbers for 2017 were just below the threshold allowing publication of results.
[49] QAA Monitoring visit for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Nazarene Theological College, April 2018

theologically rigorous and orthodox program."[50] The University of Manchester, in its most recent review of the College, commented that "the collaboration between the two institutions continues to work effectively and the facilities and learning resources for both staff and students continue to provide a good physical environment for students registered on the programmes at Nazarene and the level of both pastoral and academic support given to students is excellent."[51]

[50] External Examiners Reports, 2017-18
[51] Report of the Periodic and Institutional Review of the link with the Nazarene Theological College, May 2017.